



March 3, 2023

Leslie Blatteau

New Haven Federation of Teachers

In Support of:

House Bill 5868: An Act Authorizing Municipalities to Impose a Tax on the Endowment Funds of Private Institutions of Higher Education.

Dear Committee Chairs and Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

My name is Leslie Blatteau and I'm a teacher, parent, and resident in New Haven. I am the President of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, a union representing over 1700 educators in New Haven Public Schools. I am an At-Large Vice President of AFT-CT, a 30,000 member statewide union representing 10,000 teachers and educators in CT. NHFT and AFT-CT belong to Recovery For All – a statewide coalition fighting for a better future for Connecticut, bringing together more than 60 community, faith, and labor organizations. **I am testifying in strong support of House Bill 5868: An Act Authorizing Municipalities to Impose a Tax on the Endowment Funds of Private Institutions of Higher Education.**

As the wealthiest state in the country, Connecticut should be an example for the nation where every family has what we need to live a good life. But instead we have a state where hundreds of thousands of working people are struggling to raise families, even while private universities are adding billions to their endowments and failing to pay taxes. If a city like New Haven could tax Yale's \$42.3 billion endowment, the city could invest \$190 million to meet the needs of New Haven children and families and make our city an even more vibrant place to live and work. If Yale paid what they owe, we could:

- Reduce the property tax burden on the poor and middle class renters and homeowners.

- Reduce class size and fix the teacher and educator shortage in our public schools.
- Ensure that every public school student has access to a full-time nurse, school librarian, school social worker, and college counselor.
- Fully staff special education and English Language Learners.
- Offer free ESL classes and GED classes to adults.

As a longtime teacher and now union leader and public school parent in New Haven I know the impact of the teacher shortage. The scale of this crisis demands a bold response— our state has a responsibility to enact policies that make Connecticut a place where families can thrive. Private universities like Yale are reporting record profits: during the pandemic, while most families were struggling like never before, Yale recorded a 40.2% rate of return on their endowment—which has hit \$42.3 billion. Despite Yale’s unprecedented wealth, Yale does not pay taxes towards the City of New Haven. New Haven hosts and sustains Yale, and it’s time that Yale starts doing their part within the City.

While Yale does pay some PILOT taxes, in reality, they only pay a percentage of what they should be paying in taxes to the city. And it is voluntary! Money from Yale should be **democratically** allotted. Yale should not be exempt from the key democratic feature of government in which the people decide where their tax money goes towards. The constituents of New Haven have the right to determine where tax revenue goes—not Yale! And we believe the people of New Haven would want to see some of the following investments with these funds:

- More teachers to lower class sizes across the city
- More units of affordable housing
- More access to quality day care for young children

We have an unprecedented opportunity – and the resources – to create a state where everyone has good healthcare to lead healthy lives, high quality childcare and schools for their kids, a good job to support their families, and a safe place to call home. **I urge the Committee to have the courage to make the right choice and pass House Bill 5868: an Act Authorizing Municipalities to Impose a Tax on the Endowment Funds of Private Institutions of Higher Education.**

Thank you,
 Leslie Blatteau
 New Haven, CT